

SMILJKA GABELIC

Association of Cypriot Archaeologists

## ST. KYRIAKI IN WALLPAINTING OF CYPRUS

(PLATES XXIII - XXIV)

Late middle age is one of the most interesting periods of the rich art-heritage of Cyprus. Time and again, under various historic circumstances, different trends in art met and intertwined on this island. Ever since the Latins arrived (1191) the art of Cyprus, previously purely byzantine, developed in an unusual and specific way.

When speaking about the wallpainting of Cyprus, the meeting of East and West resulted in a certain number of specific versions. The style of this painting was affected by foreign influences,<sup>1</sup> sometimes very strongly,<sup>2</sup> while its themes also contained such solutions which differ from the usual byzantine iconography. However, on the whole this painting has, except in a small number of cases, completely remained within the limits of Byzantine art language, even when ordered by the Westerners or made by the hand of western artists. Peculiarities in relation to more widely applied byzantine practice — often, at first glance, exceptional and certainly unusual and interesting — mostly are, in fact, old byzantine iconographical formulas which had in a certain period and under changed circumstances put on a new vesture. By updating and reshaping in accordance with the taste of the epoch and local tradition new details were being added (such as more modern clothes on figures or landscapes in the backgrounds of scenes, for example) or old motives were applied in a new manner (characteristic detail is painting of the crescent and cross as the heraldic emblem on the uniform of St. George, thus presented as a 'Byzantine Crusader'<sup>3</sup>); for the same reason, the whole presentation could have taken a non-byzantine appearance although the roots of its iconography are positively byzantine — this, for example, happened with some of the presentations of St. Mamas on the lion.<sup>4</sup> By iconographic research it can often be ascertained that the origin of thematic details and literal sources of such presentations are in their essence byzantine. Therefore the union of East and West in painting of Cyprus is to be regarded as the regional expression of Byzantine art which has certain specific iconographic conceptions. It seems that one of those is the presentation of saint martyr Kyriaki. In Cyprus she has been painted in the way which was perhaps even unknown and certainly not widely spread in other areas of Byzantine world.

1. On influences of East and West in wall-painting of Cyprus in late middle age cf. A. Papageorgiou, *Masterpieces of the Byzantine Art in Cyprus*, Nicosia, 1965, 3-7; *Id.*, "Ιδιόζουσαι Βυζαντινὰι Τοιχογραφίαι του 13<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνος ἐν Κύπρῳ", *Πρακτικά τοῦ Πρώτου Διεθνoῦς Κυπρολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου*, τ. Β', Λευκωσία, 1972, 201-202.

2. J. L. Savva, *The Influence of the Italian Renaissance on Byzantine Wall-Painting in Cyprus* (thesis), Winchester College, 1977.

3. A. and J. Stylianou, 'A Cross Inside a Crescent on the Shield of St. George, Wall-Painting in the Church of Panagia Phorbiotissa Asinou, Cyprus', *Κυπριακαὶ Σπουδαὶ ΜΕΤ'*, 1982, 133-140.

4. Such is the case, for example, with the presentation of St. Mamas in the Church of the Holly Cross, 'Agiasmati' near Platanistasa.

St. Kyriaki is among the very popular saints of the orthodox church.<sup>5</sup> In monumental painting of Cyprus she is presented as one of the standing figures in the lower zone of churches. She is painted with a kind of crown and a veil on her head. On her dress there is a ribbon with medallions with busts; these half-figures have haloes around their heads and, as the inscriptions show, they represent the days of the week.

The oldest presentation of St. Kyriaki in wallpainting of Cyprus is to be found in the Church of the Virgin near Kophinou, originating from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> She is painted on the south wall. The fresco is badly damaged. Only fragments of the inscriptions can be read: *ἡ ἁγία [Κυ]ρια[κῇ]*. On the head of this saint there is a crown with prependicularia hanging from it (preserved on one side only) and a veil around her neck. On the wide strip over her dress there are traces of three medallions presenting three half-figures with aureoles. St. Kyriaki is holding a cross in her right hand. In her left hand she had a sphere which can be seen on the old photograph taken at the time the fresco was in a somewhat better condition; we also notice traces of an inscription in the medallion third from above: *[τ]ετάρτη*.<sup>7</sup> Nowadays these parts are damaged (Pl. XXIII: 1).

The second example is from the Church of St. Heracleidous in the monastery of St. John Lampadistis, Kalopanayiotis. It comes from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> She is painted on the north face of the southwest naos column. On her head she is wearing a crown, a veil and earrings. She is holding a cross in her right hand and a sphere in her left, with a cross and the Christ's monogram in it: *Ι(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς ν(ι)κ(ᾷ)*. Her red dress has a sash with six medallions showing female busts. From top to bottom these busts are marked with names of the days of a week: 1. *Δευτέρα*, 2. unreadable, 3. *Τ(ετ)άρτ(η)δη*, 4. *Πέμπτ(η)*, 5. unreadable, 6. *Σάββατο* (Pl. XXIII: 2).

In the Church of St. Demetrianos in Dhali (1317)<sup>9</sup> St. Kyriaki (inscribed *ἡ ἁγία Κυριακῇ*) is painted on the south wall pillar. She has a crown and a veil. In her raised right hand she is holding a candlestick with three burning candles, while her left hand is damaged. She is wearing a cloak over her red dress (Pl. XXIII: 3). In the lower part of the band there are three medallions; inside there are female busts with crosses in their hands (Pl. XXIV: 4).

In the Church of the Archangel Michael in Pedoulas from 1474<sup>10</sup> St. Kyriaki is painted on the north wall, also with a crown on her head and with a veil. The inscription has been fully preserved: *ἡ ἁγία Κυριακῇ*. She has four medallions on her dress and another two in her hands: *δευτέρα, τρίτ(η), τετ(άρ)τ(η)δη, παρασκευή, ὁ ἄγ(ιος) σάββατον, πέμπτ(η)*. It is characteristic that here Saturday has been presented in the form of a boy, certainly because the name of this day is of neutral gender in Greek language, while the others are feminine (Pl. XXIV: 5).

In the Church of St. Sozomenus in Galata (1513)<sup>11</sup> St. Kyriaki (*ἡ ἁγία Κυριακῇ*) is presented on

5. St. Kyriaki was named after the day on which she was born — *Κυριακῇ* in Greek means Sunday. She lived and perished in Anatolia (Asia Minor) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. She is celebrated on 7. July — H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, Bruxelles, 1902, 805-806.

6. On the Church of the Virgin near Kophinou the author is preparing a separate article dating frescoes of the oldest layer to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

7. Γ. Σωτηρίου, *Τὰ Βυζαντινά Μνημεῖα τῆς Κύπρου*, Ἀθήναι, 1935, πίν. 64.

8. Α. Παπαγεωργίου, 'Ἰδιὰζ. Βυζ. Τοιχογραφίαι', 202-205; Α. and J. Stylianou, *The Painted Churches of Cyprus*, Strourbridge, 1964, 103-105.

9. Α. and J. Stylianou, 'Donors and Dedicatory inscriptions, Supplicants and Supplications in the Painted Churches of Cyprus', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* IX, 1960, 100-101.

10. *Id.*, *The Painted Churches*, 121.

11. *Ibid.*, 42.

the west wall. As in Dhali, there is a cloak over her dress. In her right hand she is holding a three branch candlestick and in her left a medallion with female bust denoting Saturday: *τὸ ἀγί(ον) σάβ[βατον]*. The remaining five medallions are on the band she is usually wearing; inside there are female half-figures and in front of each there is a cross. The busts are marked with initial letters of the names of the days: Α in the first, in the second nothing has been preserved, in the third is again: Α, there is nothing preserved in the fourth and in the fifth: Π (Pl. XXIV: 6-7).

The given chronological survey of the frescoes of St. Kyriaki in Cyprus is not to be considered complete. The intention is to point out this unusual picture and to initiate a more comprehensive clarification of its contents.

Iconographically, the St. Kyriaki of Cyprus differs in some details from her presentations in other parts of the byzantine world and we have not found any direct analogy. In the same way, it does not correspond to presentations of the same saint in the art of the West, where she appears as a late medieval didactic motive (second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century - 16<sup>th</sup> century) but in a different iconographical scheme.<sup>12</sup>

Before pointing out the peculiarities of this picture we should first mention that the position of St. Kyriaki's fresco in the churches of Cyprus is common; as in all byzantine churches her image is always placed on the west or one of the side walls in the central part of the church, that is, in places where figures of the female saints are painted. As the *παρθενομάρτυρος τοῦ Χριστοῦ*<sup>13</sup> she is painted next to other female martyrs ('fiancées of Christ') — Sts Barbara, Irene, Marina, Catherine, Anastasia, Theodosia and others. The common trait of the hagiography of all these saints is that they have dedicated their lives to religion and 'heavenly kingdom', after consecrating to virginity. Speaking in terms of religion, they had perished in order to 'reign with Christ' (who is 'the emperor of emperors' (*Apocal.* XIX, 16); he gave them imperial crowns and dress them into purple robes deserved by the (blood) they had shed.<sup>14</sup> They were presented young and pretty, some as nuns and others, like St. Kyriaki, in rich noble or imperial garments. They are examples of moral perfection and corporal purity.

The garments of St. Kyriaki are not always the same but she has never been presented as a nun; according to her Vita she never had a monastic life. She could have been presented in a kind of a ritual dress resembling the garments of the nobles, but with a narrow strip on its edge ('oration') signifying 'diaconissa' and symbolizing consecration of a virgin to a marriage with Christ.<sup>15</sup> She has been presented this way in Kiliçlar Kuskuk Kilise, Göreme in Cappadocia (11<sup>th</sup> cent.), Bojana in Bulgaria (1259), St. Photini near Preveli in Crete (14<sup>th</sup> cent.) and in Gracanica (around 1320) and Staro Nagoricino (1316-1318) in Yugoslavia.<sup>16</sup> On her head she has a ring and a veil reminding a sort of a cap and in her hand she is holding a cross (Staro Nagoricino,

12. The western iconography contains symbolic expression of St. Kyriaki (meaning the day) in the form of Christ standing injured body with various tools in the background / R. Wildhaber, Der 'Feiertagschristus' als ikonogr. Ausdruck der Sonntagsheiligung', *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 16/1, Zürich, 1956, 1-34/ or rarely, in the form of a young woman with a crown on her head, surrounded with everyday life scenes / *Ibid.*, 20, fig. 28; F. Stelè, 'Ikonografski kompleks slike 'Svete Nedelje' v Crngrobu' (Summary in German), *Razprave II, Slovenska Akademija znanosti i umetnosti* 2, Ljubljana, 1944, 428-429, fig. 36/.

13. L. Petit, *Bibliographie des Acolouthies grecques*, Bruxelles, 1926, 54.

14. J. Radovanović, 'Neveste Hristove u zivopisu Bogorodice Ljeviske u Prizrenu', *Žbornik za likovne umetnosti* 15, 1979, 122-124 (Summary in French).

15. A. Grabar, *La peinture religieuse en Bulgarie*, Paris, 1928, 125, 157.

16. M. Restle, *Die Byzantinische Wandmalerei in Kleinasien II.*, Recklinghausen 1967, 295 (Göreme); A. Grabar, *op. cit.*, 124, pl. XVI (Bojana); K. Kalokyris, *The Byzantine Wall Painting of Crete*, New York, 1973, 145, C 29 (Preveli); P. Mijović, *Menolog*, Beograd, 1973, sl. 85 (Staro Nagoricino); V.R. Petković, *La peinture serbe du moyen age I*, Beograd, 1930, pl. 52: b (Gracanica).

Gracanica,, Hagioi Anargyroi in Castoria)<sup>17</sup> or she is presented with raised hands in the orans position (Göreme, Bojana, Kurbinovo).<sup>18</sup> In Cyprus we see her in imperial garments with a crown on her head, which is not so unusual. She is presented in a similar way in Bogorodica Ljeviska (1310-1313), the Church of the Virgin in Pecka patrijarsija (before 1337) and in several churches from the 15<sup>th</sup> century near Ohrid.<sup>19</sup> On these examples the garments of St. Kyriaki are imperial but with fashion characteristics and resemble more the contemporary outfit of noble women. On three later cypriot examples (Dhali, Pedoulas, Galata) St. Kyriaki had also lost the appearance of an empress and reminds of a lady of high rank. In Cyprus, the change was also in the attribute — the cross she was holding in her hand was replaced in later examples by the candlestick, a motif symbolizing the idea of resurrection. In two earlier cypriot frescoes (Kophinou, Kalopanayiotis) St. Kyriaki is presented in garments exactly corresponding to those of byzantine empresses. Over the upper part of the dress there is a wide breast-cloth (*μανιάκης*, later called *κατωμαδόν*)<sup>20</sup> with a sash; in front it is going downwards over the chest and from the back it is folded over the hip and held in the opposite hand. This band completely corresponds to the single, uncrossed *loros* (*λῶρος*) which is an integral part of the byzantine imperial vestment.<sup>21</sup>

Symbolism of St. Kyriaki's garments and of the other parts of her outfit — the crown, the veil and the attributes she is holding in her hands — is based on interpretations on her Vita and other liturgical texts used in rites; due to her firm faith and determination she has been glorified as one of the 'brides' or 'empresses' of Christs, so that such clothes within this context suit her. However, in painting of this saint on Cyprus, another symbolic thought has been expressed through personifications of days in the medallions. Thus, the painting does not represent the historic image of saint martyr Kyriaki nor its symbolic substitute as a Christ's bride but is a pictorial interpretation of her name — Sunday, the day of the resurrection of Christ, and of the other days of the week. How did it happen that this iconographic conception was been expressed in Cyprus is a question that will be explained in more extensive investigation of the iconography and cult of St. Kyriaki, which exceeds the scope of this article. Certainly, such presentation explicitly, even literally exhibits its theologic contents.

(Translation: G. Sokorac)

17. Σ. Πελεκανίδης, *Καστοριά*, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1953, πίν. 40; For Staro Nagoricino and Gracanica see n. 16.

18. L. Haderman-Misquish, *Kurbinovo*, Bruxelles, 1975, 261, fig. 134; for Göreme and Bojana see n. 16.

19. J. Radovanović, *op. cit.*, 125-127, crt. 2, sl. 5 (Bogorodica Ljeviska); V. R. Petković, *La peinture serbe du moyen âge II* Beograd, 1934, pl. CVII (Pecka patrijarsija); G. Subotić, *Ohridska slikarska skola XV veka*, Beograd, 1980, 90, 97, 145, dessins 69, 78, 114.

20. J. Ebersolt, *Les arts somptuaires de Byzance*, Paris, 1923, 114, 121.

21. On *loros* cf. C. Lamy-Lassalle, 'Les archanges en costume impérial dans la peinture murale italienne', *Synthronon*, Paris, 1968, 189, n. 2.

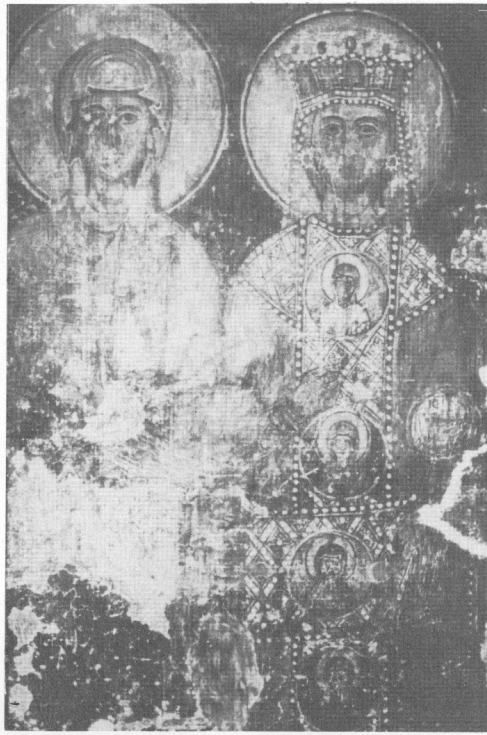
## LIST OF THE PLATES

- Pl. XXIII: 1. The Church of the Virgin near Kophinou, St. Kyriaki (end of 12<sup>th</sup> Cent.).  
2. The Church of St. Heracleidius, Monastery of St. John Lampadistis, Kalopanayiotis, Unknown Saint and St. Kyriaki (13<sup>th</sup> cent.).  
3. The Church of St. Demetrianos, Dhali, St. Kyriaki (1317).
- Pl. XXIV: 4. Detail of fig. 3.  
5. The Church of the Archangel Michael in Pedoulas, St. Kyriaki (1474).  
6. The Church of St. Sozomenous in Galata, St. Kyriaki (1513).  
7. Same church, St. Kyriaki, detail.





1



2

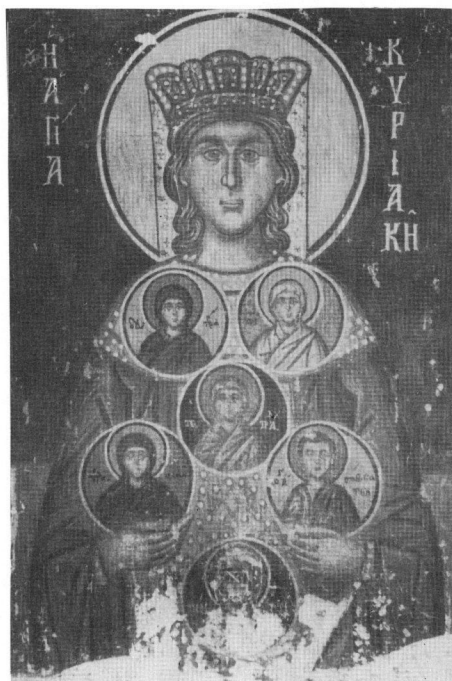


3

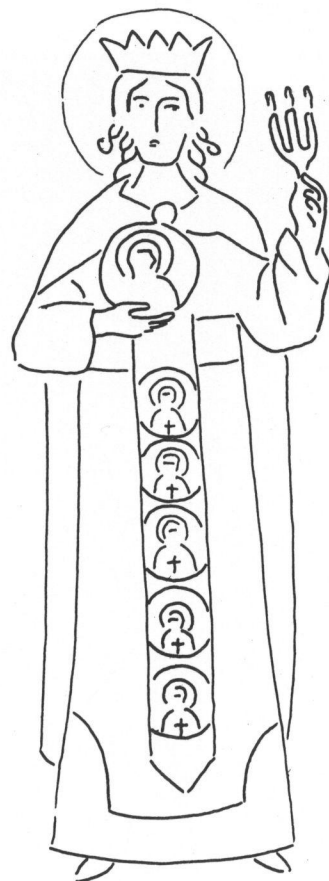
PLATE XXIV



4



5



6



7